

# Pet Patter

## Antifreeze Poisoning

By Liz Thurston, DVM

Ethylene glycol makes up approximately 95% of all commonly used antifreeze.

It is very sweet tasting for both dogs and cats, and is mainly a problem in fall, winter and early spring. And the worst part is, ethylene glycol is highly toxic and rapidly fatal. One teaspoon per cat and two table-spoons per dog can kill.

Once licked up, antifreeze is rapidly absorbed and distributed to all body tissues where the damage is done.

There are 3 stages of signs seen with antifreeze poisoning:

### Stage 1 - Nervous System Disorders:

This occurs 30 minutes to 12 hours after ingestion of antifreeze. Your pet will exhibit nausea (quiet, drooling, licking lips, swallowing a lot) and vomiting.

Often drinking a lot and urinating frequently are seen 1 hour after ingestion. As signs progress, he/she will become depressed, apprehensive, have trouble breathing, stagger and, if enough has been consumed, become paralyzed, seizure and go into a coma. Death is rapid.

### Stage 2 - Heart and Lungs Affected

Usually within 12 to 24 hours after ingestion, if your pet has survived this far, the heart rate becomes very rapid and short, and difficult breathing occurs. Sometimes this stage is confused with apparent recovery but actually damaging crystals are beginning to form in the kidneys as the chemical is being filtered from the body.

### Stage 3 - Kidney Failure

If your pet has lived to this point, (12 to 72 hours after ingestion in dogs and 12 to 24 hours in cats) you may see severe depression, vomiting and diarrhea, severely watery urine or lack of urination, abdominal pain, and mouth sores. High blood levels of urea and nitrogen toxins are found, caused by lack of normal kidney filtration. This indicates kidney failure.

If you see or know your pet has consumed this poison and treatment is begun very quickly, the prognosis can be quite good.

However, pets which have ingested large amounts or are continuously vomiting, severely depressed or in a coma, or are in kidney failure have a very grave prognosis.

Treatment involves intravenous fluid therapy, controlling any seizures and ethanol. Therapy with the drug ethanol is usually 100% successful if begun within 1 hour of ingestion, however if more than 4 hours have elapsed, it is much less effective. The drug acts by competitively stopping the breakdown of the antifreeze so it's damaging crystals cannot be formed.

As you can see, this is a devastating condition. The important key here is prevention. Keep all antifreeze, coolants, industrial solvents and rust removers containing ethylene glycol properly contained with strong lids and out of reach of children and pets.

Clean up any spills thoroughly, and keep animals and children away when using these products. Educate yourself on the signs of toxicity and if there is even a remote possibility of ingestion, call us immediately.

Liz Thurston is a local veterinarian.



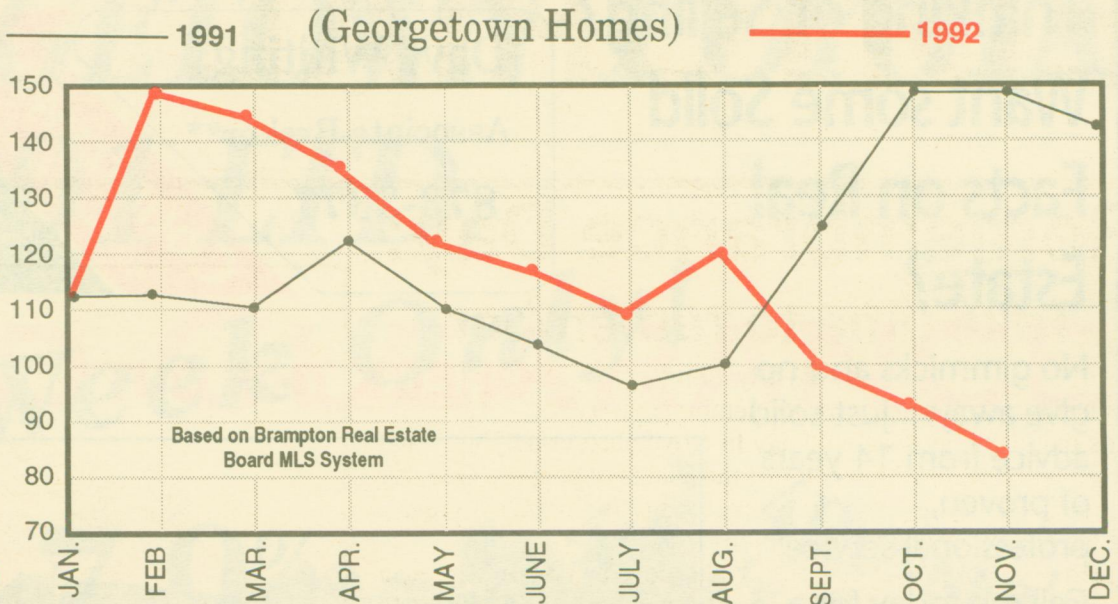
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